

# Who Was Roberto Clemente

Roberto Clemente

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Roberto Enrique Clemente Walker (Spanish pronunciation: [roˈe̞to enˈrike kleˈmente (ː)walˈkeː]; August 18, 1934 – December 31, 1972) was a Puerto Rican professional baseball player who played 18 seasons in Major League Baseball (MLB) for the Pittsburgh Pirates, primarily as a right fielder. On December 31st, 1972, Clemente was killed when his Douglas DC-7 airplane, which he had chartered for a flight to take and deliver emergency relief goods for the survivors of a massive earthquake in Nicaragua, crashed and plunged into the water off the coast of Isla Verde, Puerto Rico. He was 38 years old. After his sudden death, the National Baseball Hall of Fame changed its rules so that a player who had been dead for at least six months would be eligible for entry. In 1973, Clemente was posthumously inducted, becoming the first player from the Caribbean and second of Hispanic descent (after Lefty Gomez in 1972) to be honored in the Hall of Fame.

Born in Carolina, Puerto Rico, Clemente was a track and field star and an Olympic hopeful in his youth before deciding to turn his full attention to baseball. His professional career began at the age of eighteen, with the Cangrejeros de Santurce of the Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League. He quickly attracted the attention of the Brooklyn Dodgers who signed him to a bonus of \$10,000. However, due to the bonus rule under which Clemente had signed and the Dodgers' decision to send him to the minor leagues, they lost Clemente to the Pittsburgh Pirates who drafted him after the 1954 season.

Clemente was an All-Star for 13 seasons, selected to 15 All-Star Games. He was the National League (NL) Most Valuable Player (MVP) in 1966, the NL batting leader in 1961, 1964, 1965, and 1967, and a Gold Glove Award winner for 12 consecutive seasons from 1961 through 1972. His batting average was over .300 for 13 seasons and he had 3,000 hits during his major league career. He also was a two-time World Series champion. Clemente was the first player from the Caribbean and Latin America to win a World Series as a starting position player (1960), to receive an NL MVP Award (1966), and to receive a World Series MVP Award (1971).

During the offseason, in addition to playing winter ball in Puerto Rico, Clemente was involved in charity work in Latin American and Caribbean countries. In 1972, he died in a plane crash at the age of 38 while en route to deliver aid to victims of the Nicaragua earthquake. The following season, the Pittsburgh Pirates retired his uniform number 21. In his honor, Major League baseball renamed the Commissioner's Award, given to the player who "best exemplifies the game of baseball, sportsmanship, community involvement and the individual's contribution to his team", to the Roberto Clemente Award.

Roberto Clemente Award

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The Roberto Clemente Award is given annually to the Major League Baseball (MLB) player who "best exemplifies the game of baseball, sportsmanship, community involvement and the individual's contribution to his team", as voted on by baseball fans and members of the media. It is named for Hall of Fame outfielder Roberto Clemente. Originally known as the Commissioner's Award, it has been presented by MLB since 1971. In 1973, the award was renamed after Clemente following his death in a plane crash while he was delivering supplies to victims of the Nicaragua earthquake.

Each year, a panel of baseball dignitaries selects one player from among 30 nominees, one from each club. Teams choose their nominee during the regular season, and the winner is announced before Game 3 of the World Series. The player who receives the most votes online via MLB's official website, MLB.com, gets one vote in addition to the votes cast by the panel. Since 2007, the Roberto Clemente Award has been presented by Chevy. Chevy donates money and a Chevy vehicle to the recipient's charity of choice and additional money is donated by Chevy to the Roberto Clemente Sports City, a non-profit organization in Carolina, Puerto Rico, that provides national sports activities for children. Chevy donates additional funds to the charity of choice of each of the 30 club nominees.

The first recipient of the award was Willie Mays, and the most recent honoree is Salvador Pérez. No player has received the award more than once. The first pitcher to receive the award was Phil Niekro in 1980, and the first catcher to receive it was Gary Carter in 1989. The team to have the most winners representing their club is the St. Louis Cardinals. To date, Clemente's former teammate Willie Stargell and Andrew McCutchen are the only members of the Pittsburgh Pirates to receive the honor. Stargell won his award in 1974 and McCutchen in 2015. The Pirates themselves have worn Clemente-era throwback uniforms in recent years on Roberto Clemente Day, on which day they present their award nominee to MLB. In 2014, the award was presented to two players—Paul Konerko and Jimmy Rollins—for the first, and to date, only time. Currently, the active MLB teams that have never won the award are the Colorado Rockies, Los Angeles Angels, Miami Marlins, Texas Rangers, Toronto Blue Jays, and Washington Nationals.

In 2022, Major League Baseball created a circular patch with Clemente's number, "21" to be displayed on the backs of active Clemente award winners' hats and helmets if they so choose.

## Roberto Clemente Coliseum

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Roberto Clemente Coliseum (Spanish: Coliseo Roberto Clemente) is a sports and concert arena located in San Juan, Puerto Rico. It was, for many years, Puerto Rico's largest indoor event facility, and remains one of the largest.

## Vera Zabala

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Vera Zabala Clemente (March 6, 1941 – November 16, 2019) was a Puerto Rican philanthropist who was the head of the Roberto Clemente Foundation. She founded a sports education facility in Puerto Rico and was a Goodwill Ambassador for Major League Baseball. She was the wife of baseball player Roberto Clemente, who died in 1972, and the mother of sportscaster Roberto Clemente Jr. She went to the White House in 2003 to receive her husband's posthumous Presidential Medal of Freedom.

## Roberto Clemente Bridge

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## Liga de Béisbol Profesional Roberto Clemente

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The Roberto Clemente Professional Baseball League (Spanish: Liga de Béisbol Profesional Roberto Clemente, abbreviation LBPRC) is the main professional baseball league in Puerto Rico; it is colloquially referred to as the Puerto Rican Winter League. Consisting of six teams as of the 2023–24 season, the league's champion participates in the Caribbean Series.

The league was founded as Liga de Béisbol Profesional de Puerto Rico in 1938. In 2007, the league suspended operations for the first time since its creation; it resumed operations in 2008 after restructuring and changing its name to Puerto Rico Baseball League (PRBL). In May 2012, the league debuted its current name, choosing to honor Baseball Hall of Fame inductee Roberto Clemente by naming it after him and adopting his philosophy of athletic development.

#### Legacy of Roberto Clemente

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Roberto Clemente is considered one of Puerto Rico's most important Major League Baseball players and became the first Latin American player to enter the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. As a humanitarian, he became known for his philanthropic activities and for being outspoken in civic issues that affected the Hispanic and Latino communities. In both of these facets, Clemente left a long-lasting legacy that remains socially relevant and the subject of academic study and recognitions over fifty years after his death.

#### Roberto Clemente Stadium

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Roberto Clemente Stadium (Spanish: Estadio Roberto Clemente) is a multi-purpose stadium in Carolina, Puerto Rico. It is currently used mostly for baseball games and is the home of Gigantes de Carolina. The stadium holds 12,500 people and was built in 2000. It is named after former Puerto Rican baseball great and native of Carolina, Roberto Clemente.

It hosted the 2007 Caribbean Series. From 2008 it is the home of the Gigantes de Carolina (football club) who plays in the Puerto Rico Soccer League.

It has been a venue for political campaign events, and gift-giving holiday events.

#### Statue of Roberto Clemente (New York City)

*Fame outfielder Roberto Clemente was unveiled at Roberto Clemente State Park in Morris Heights, The Bronx, New York City. The statue was commissioned Goya*

In 2013, a statue of Baseball Hall of Fame outfielder Roberto Clemente was unveiled at Roberto Clemente State Park in Morris Heights, The Bronx, New York City. The statue was commissioned Goya Foods and was created by sculptor Maritza Hernandez. It was the first statue honoring a Puerto Rican to be unveiled in New York City.

#### Roberto Clemente Community Academy

*Roberto Clemente Community Academy (commonly known as Clemente, Roberto Clemente High School) is a public four-year high school located in the West Town*

Roberto Clemente Community Academy (commonly known as Clemente, Roberto Clemente High School) is a public four-year high school located in the West Town community area of Chicago, Illinois. Operated by the Chicago Public Schools, the school is named for Puerto Rican baseball player Roberto Enrique Clemente (1934–1972).

Gina M. Pérez, the author of *The Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, and Puerto Rican Families*, wrote that in Chicago the school is known as "the Puerto Rican high school". Jennifer Domino Rudolph, author of *Embodying Latino Masculinities: Producing Masculinidad* wrote that the school "is strongly associated with Puerto Rican cultural nationalism". Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas, author of *National Performances: The Politics of Class, Race, and Space in Puerto Rican Chicago*, wrote that the school was portrayed in the media as "the property of Puerto Rican nationalists" and "as part of Puerto Rico." Rudolph stated that media depictions of violence from Puerto Rican nationalism movements caused the school to become controversial, and that the school was associated with much of the "backlash against manifestations of Puerto Rican identity." According to Pérez, as of 2004, most West Town area residents have a sense of pride in the school, while also lamenting issues common in Chicago public schools that appear at Clemente, such as gangs and school violence, dropouts, and low test scores.

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